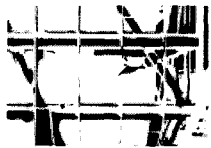


**From:** Shin-Roei Lee  
**To:** Andree Greenberg; Brian Wines; Bruce Wolfe; Dale Bowyer; Dyan Whyte;...  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 08, 2010 10:46 AM  
**Subject:** news on Cargill salt ponds in Redwood City

Hi all, There is nothing earth-shattering in this article. I want to share with you mostly because of the nice aerial photo toward the end of the article, which shows the scale of the ponds in the context of the urban landscape along Highway 101.

[http://www.archpaper.com/e-board\\_rev.asp?News\\_ID=5021](http://www.archpaper.com/e-board_rev.asp?News_ID=5021)

Redwood City has been conducting CEQA scoping meetings with different focuses. I attended one in the evening on 11/30 on water supply, flooding and wastewater. The next one will be on Saturday, January 29 on biological resources. Andree and I plan to attend. Andree is in the process of preparing an outline for our NOP comments, which are due 2/28/11. After we have a chance to run the outline by Bruce by mid-December, we plan to solicit your input on specific topics in the NOP. Thanks!



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Despite claims to the contrary, Cargill's Saltworks development is not smart growth

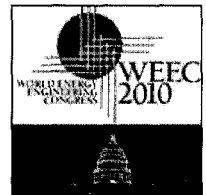
THE REDWOOD CITY SALTWORKS IS THE SITE OF A MAJOR PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.  
COURTESY DMB

"Are there dumber places to build?" asked David Lewis, executive director of Oakland's Save the Bay. "Possibly, but a project on this site can't be considered smart growth or transit-oriented development." Lewis was talking about Saltworks, the Bay Area's latest smart-growth battle.

The project is backed by agribusiness giant Cargill and LA developer DMB. Its lead planner is smart growth's founding father, Peter Calthorpe. The team is proposing to reclaim Cargill's remaining 1,435 acres of salt flats to create an arc-shaped building site on the bay side of Pacific Shores, a levee-protected bay-fill development on Redwood City's waterfront, four miles southeast of San Francisco International Airport.

Calthorpe argues that Saltworks makes perfect sense. He points to its proximity to Redwood City's CalTrain station and to Silicon Valley's need for employee housing. He typifies Cargill's salt flats as an industrial site—

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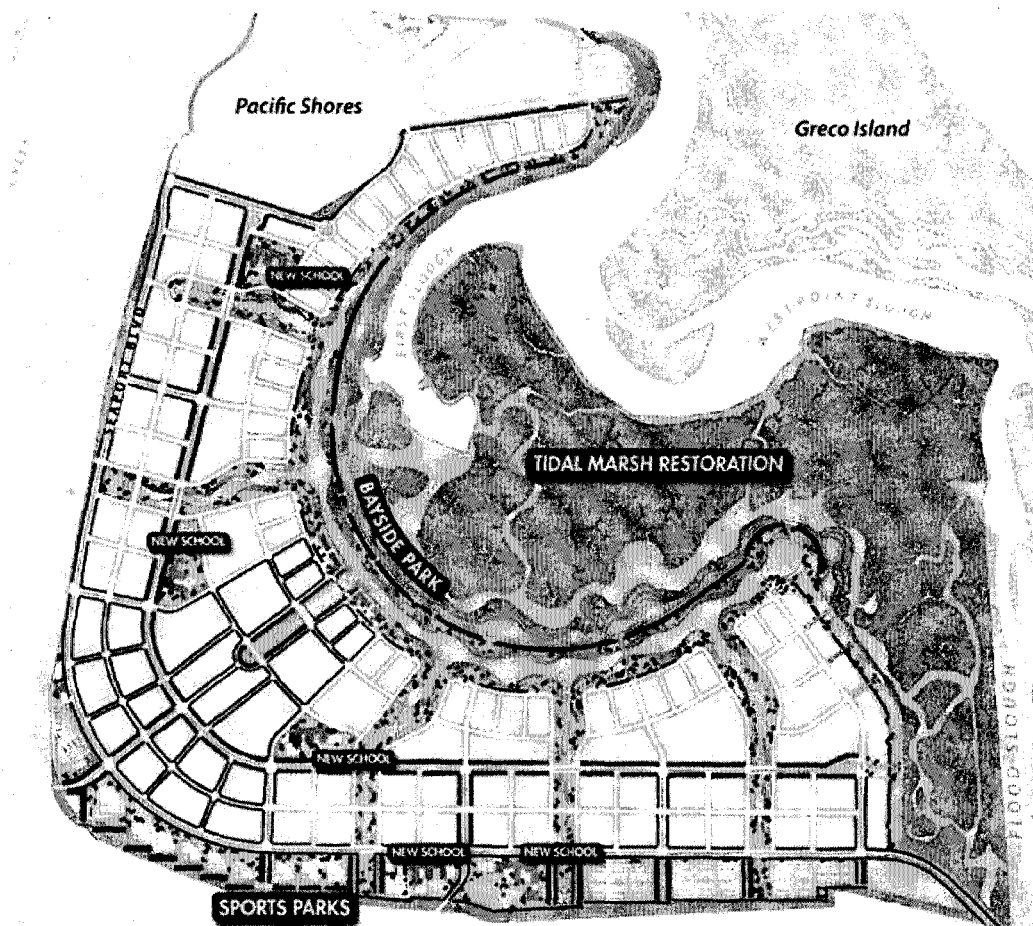
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"a factory without a roof"—some of which will be restored as marshlands by Cargill and DMB if they redevelop the rest. Replying to criticism that the site is vulnerable to rising sea levels, he notes that San Francisco's Mission Bay has the same problem, yet is being developed intensively. Then he plays his trump card: His critics are ignoring the NIMBY foot-dragging that's keeping the Bay Area from hitting its housing targets, he says. Developing at a high density outside existing transit corridors is therefore a necessity.

All the smart-growth boxes are ticked with these remarks, but do they really add up? In a recent letter to Redwood City, the seasoned Oakland politician Don Perata skewered Saltworks' smart-growth pretensions. "The Cargill proposal is bay fill, not infill," he wrote. "Its impact contradicts contemporary regional land use planning and is a thinly veiled deterrent to new housing in places where costly infrastructure already exists." Like Oakland, for example, which is "leveraging sunken costs and past investments for sustainable development," Perata adds.



PLAN FOR REDWOOD CITY SALTWORKS SHOWS NEW DEVELOPMENT AND RESTORED MARSHLAND.

Save the Bay also questions if Saltworks really adds up the way Calthorpe asserts. While the plan shows transit stops, the prevailing commute pattern is heavily tipped toward cars. Indeed, one of the biggest objections to the project is the likelihood that it would dump a lot of traffic onto a road system that's already stretched and stressed. There's a "build-it-and-transit-will-come" quality to Calthorpe's Saltworks pitch that doesn't square with actual regional transit priorities.

Then there's the inconvenient matter of climate change. Redwood Shores is the product of another era's thinking. Its most recent addition, Pacific Shores, was approved more than 20 years ago. Last year, the California Climate Adaptation Strategy report from California's Natural Resources Agency made it clear that new development in areas subject to sea-level rise is a really bad idea. In June, the Army Corps of Engineers also weighed in, finding that Saltworks needs a permit under the U.S. Clean Water Act of 1972. That's a big hurdle. Is Redwood City paying attention?

Here's why they should. By midcentury, rising sea levels will be an issue in the Bay. By century's end, the levees that protect Redwood Shores could take on Dutch proportions. The Bay Area Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) is taking a hard look at growth on bay-front properties. Still neutral on Saltworks, BCDC's Will Travis at least acknowledges the dilemma: If you develop here, you saddle local and probably regional government with a big and expensive problem down the road.

The other opportunity is to restore the nearby Bay marshlands, much like what's happening with Cargill's

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similarly large salt-flats tract in Napa. Doing so is one way to protect low-lying properties behind them—including Redwood Shores—from sea-level rise. (Marshlands mitigate the rise both by working against climate change and tempering its effects.) The San Francisco Bay and Delta are under constant development pressure. Both are vast and critical elements in the region's ecology. Like the Pacific Coast north and south of San Francisco, they need to be protected.

While you can't blame Cargill for trying, developing on Bay frontage feels like sprawl. Calthorpe's rationale—NIMBY made me do it!—sidesteps a bigger problem. The uphill battle to add density to Bay Area cities reflects widespread reservations about the smart-growth formula, especially when it's imposed without any real sensitivity or imagination.



VIEW OF THE CARGILL-OWNED REDWOOD CITY SALTWORKS SITE.

Smart growth emerged in parallel with regional efforts to halt and reverse the erosion of open space. Higher-density development, especially in transit corridors, went hand in hand with these efforts. It's true that the higher-density goal isn't universally accepted, but the resistance to it may reflect community displeasure with what's typically on offer. With its diagrammatic mix of housing and office buildings, Saltworks is another instance of a formula that, like modernism in the 1970s, has just about run its course. Most of us won't have to look at it, but that doesn't make it right.

Calthorpe, no inconsequential figure, should be taking the lead in getting smart growth out of its current impasse. Such urbanity as the Bay Area possesses reflects earlier generations' respect for what exists. There's no agreement yet on how to best accommodate future growth, but there are built examples across the region that suggest fruitful and nuanced new directions. For example, San Francisco's Mission Street corridor, which has added density incrementally while improving the quality of life on the street, shows how the Peninsula could build around its CalTrain stations. The mistakes we've made in the past with higher-density development in the Bay Area have involved overreaching, ignoring precedent, and allowing ourselves to be lulled by "out of sight, out of mind."

Even if you accept the smart-growth formula on offer, the Cargill salt flats are the wrong location for intensive development. This isn't 1990. In 2010, a bay-fill project that looks toward midcentury has a problem. Smart it's not, and the adults in the room should put a halt to it.

John Parman

John Parman is a Berkeley-based writer.



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